



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Health Officials Investigating Active Tuberculosis Cases in Grand Forks County

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health, Grand Forks Public Health Department and Altru Health System are investigating a cluster of active tuberculosis (TB) cases in Grand Forks County.

The state health department has recently confirmed three cases of active TB in Grand Forks County. All three cases identified were men – one man in his 20s and the two other in their 40s.

Health officials are currently conducting contact investigations to identify people who may have been exposed to the active cases. Those who are considered at risk will be contacted and given guidance about testing procedures. Examples of groups that may be contacted include family members, coworkers, friends and roommates. All three cases have indicated that they do not have a permanent address and have been staying with friends or family. None of them have indicated that they have stayed in a shelter.

Through information gathered with testing, it appears that the three cases may be linked to previously confirmed cases in the area. All identified close contacts will be evaluated and tested, if necessary.

Tuberculosis is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air when someone with TB disease has coughed or sneezed into the air, usually in an indoor environment. Exposure to tuberculosis includes frequent or prolonged exposure, such as sitting in a small room or confined area for a long period of time with someone who has active TB. Anyone can get TB. Individuals with weakened immune systems, including those with AIDS or those infected with HIV, are at increased risk. In the United States, the most common risk factors for TB are social factors, such as substance abuse, being incarcerated in a correctional facility, minority populations, being born in a country where TB is more common and homelessness.

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The general symptoms of TB disease include feeling sick or weak, weight loss, fever and night sweats. The symptoms of TB of the lungs include productive, prolonged cough (duration of three weeks or longer), chest pain, and coughing up blood. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact his or her health-care provider as soon as possible for an evaluation.

The most important way to stop the spread of tuberculosis is to cover the mouth and nose when coughing, and for those with TB to take the prescribed medication as directed. Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.

For more information, contact Dee Pritschet, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2377 or Grand Forks Public Health, at 701.787.8100. Information about TB can be found by visiting www.ndhealth.gov/disease/tb/ or www.cdc.gov/tb/.

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